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X24933 9-8-80 H 118-2338 H: Mr. Itoh

September 12, 1980

Dear Mr. Wright:

Thank you for your inquiry of August 29 on behalf of Ms. Lois Way concerning the welfare of Mr. Kim Dae Jung in the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim Dae Jung was among the prominent political leaders and dissidents detained for investigation on May 17 and 18. On July 31, the Prosecution Division of the Martial Law Command announced the indictment of Mr. Kim and 23 others on charges of violating martial law decrees, the Foreign Exchange Control Law, and the Anti-Communism and National Security Laws.

The trial of Mr. Kim and twelve co-defendants began on August 14. The American Embassy has had an observer present at all sessions of the trial. Some other foreign diplomats, journalists and members of the defendants' immediate families have been allowed to observe the proceedings.

We share Ms. Way's concern and have expressed our views clearly to the Korean Government. We are particularly disturbed by reports of harsh treatment of Mr. Kim and some of his fellow prisoners. We have publicly expressed our skepticism about the sweeping charges against Mr. Kim.

We believe that our fundamental interest in peace and stability in Northeast Asia would best be served in Korea by progress toward constitutional reform and by a more broadly based civilian government supported by the Korean people. Therefore, we have expressed publicly and privately our deep concern over the recent serious setbacks in the political

The Honorable
Jim Wright,
House of Representatives.

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liberalization process -- the extension of martial law, the suspension of all political activity, the arrests of political leaders and the resignation of President Choi Kyu Hah.

Sincerely,

J. Brian Atwood
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence returned.